

# We're Engaged! A Community-University Library Collaboration

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## Abstract

*Since its inception, Metropolitan State University has demonstrated a strong commitment to community partnerships and the integration of community engagement into student learning and scholarship while meeting community-defined needs. This article presents examples of reciprocal partnerships in the context of a shared community-university library facility, which perseveres through the challenges of an impoverished neighborhood and diminishing funding resources.*

Metropolitan State University, the city of St. Paul, and the Dayton's Bluff community have created a shared library facility that provides effective and innovative approaches to meeting public and academic information and learning needs. Opened in 2004, the shared space has led to a robust agenda of diverse programs that would not exist without the public/university collaboration. Both organizations have grown in their ability to make the partnership work well and to deliver programs that respond to changing demands.

This article will briefly describe the history of how the partnership came to be, the extensive array of programs that have been implemented to serve agreed-upon goals, strategies for data collection, and the university's approach to framing their community engagement agenda that underpins their role in the partnership—the “Circle of Engagement.”

## The Dawn of a Community-University Library

Shumer et al. (2009) provide a snapshot of the early actions (through 2006) that brought the university, the Dayton's Bluff community, and the city of St. Paul together to create one library to meet many of the learning needs of academia and the public.

Planning for a joint library system started in the 1980s and 1990s, when the District Community Council in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood dreamed of having a local library. Metropolitan State, a university without walls prior to 1992, acquired and renovated the Dayton's Bluff property, but was also faced with the issue of no campus library for its students.

To deal with this concern, Metropolitan State's president engaged the city of Saint Paul and the Saint Paul Public Library system in conversations that led to a commitment of developing a truly collaborative library.

To accomplish this shared mission, the university and Saint Paul Public Library spent a decade developing financial resources, planning, and beginning construction, ensuring community collaboration every step of the way.

Private funds were raised for the facility and the legislature provided \$1 million in planning grants. Funding and planning progressed, and on May 10, 2004, a \$21 million 86,000 square foot joint library opened its doors to the community.

The joint library building has two major components: a family-centered public library specializing in children's literature and a homework center; and a university library that includes a 50,000 volume collection, a math and writing center, classrooms, a bookstore, and an art gallery. It was the first only public library and academic institution to provide cooperative library services out of a shared facility in Minnesota.

To better understand the significance of this shared library, it is important to have a snapshot of the setting.

**The Community.** More than 62,000 (22 percent) of Saint Paul residents currently live in poverty, more than doubling the state of Minnesota's average (U. S. Census Bureau, Census 2010; U. S. Census Bureau, Census 2000). Nearly half of St. Paul residents rent their homes, leading to higher transiency rates and having an impact on transfer rates of students in K–12 neighborhood schools. From 2000 to 2010, U.S. Census data shows an increase in African-American and Hispanic populations, and a slight decrease in White and Asian populations. Census 2010 data shows that more than 40 percent of St. Paul's residents are persons of color with 15.7 percent African-American, 15 percent Asian, 9.6 percent Hispanic, and smaller populations of Mixed Race, American Indian, and Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. It is also notable that Minnesota has the second largest population of Hmong residents in the United States, with roughly half living in St. Paul. The city's Dayton's Bluff neighborhood continues to be one of the most impoverished and most transient neighborhoods. While there are constant challenges, the area's rich diversity presents continuous opportunities for reciprocal community-based learning experiences for university students and faculty in the St. Paul Public Library Dayton's Bluff Branch library (Minnesota Compass 2011).

The Saint Paul Public Library system began with the Central Library established in 1914, and now boasts 12 branch libraries and a bookmobile, having grown and evolved to fit the changing face of Saint Paul and its communities (St. Paul Public Library 2012). In 1945, Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library was established and through the years, the nationally recognized Friends organization continues to be a key partner with the city of St. Paul in the provision of library service through fundraising, programming, and advocacy.

With a mission and vision to connect people in Saint Paul with "the imperative and the joy of learning through a lifetime, while reflecting the needs and values of that community, and aligning library resources with key community partners," the St. Paul Public Library system and Metropolitan State University' relationship quickly

manifested into a deep multi-faceted partnership, vital for the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood that had gone too long without a public library.

**The Engaged Campus.** Metropolitan State University, a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System (MNSCU), has a forty-two year history of creative learning strategies that include connecting with communities to provide academic engagement opportunities for students while meeting community-defined needs. A non-traditional university, the student body is made up of over 11,000 students, ages sixteen to seventy-nine with an average age of thirty-two. The university's student body consists of 34 percent students of color—the highest percentage of the thirty-one colleges and universities in the MNSCU System. As stated in the Mission:

Metropolitan State University is a comprehensive urban university committed to meeting the higher education needs of the Twin Cities and greater metropolitan population. The university will provide accessible, high-quality liberal arts, professional, and graduate education to the citizens and communities of the metropolitan area, with continued emphasis on underserved groups, including adults and communities of color. Within the context of lifelong learning, the university will build on its national reputation for innovative student-centered programs that enable students from diverse backgrounds to achieve their educational goals. The university is committed to academic excellence and community partnerships through curriculum, teaching, scholarship, and services designed to support an urban mission.

(Metropolitan State University 2012)

The majority (71 percent) of the university's graduates are from the metropolitan area. Metropolitan State University is comprised of four campuses: two in St. Paul, one in Minneapolis, and the newest campus in the Brooklyn Park (a facility shared with Hennepin Technical and Community College), which houses the university's School of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice programs. All academic departments, schools, and colleges align with the university's mission and vision by connecting students with businesses and organizations, which provide creative learning strategies such as internships, practicums, student- and faculty-designed independent studies, and community-based learning experiences. The university's College of Individualized Studies—the top major program—provides students the opportunity to design a degree plan, which reflects their personal, educational, and career needs through an Individualized Bachelor of Arts that features creative (or alternative) and experiential learning opportunities. The university's faculty body includes approximately 700 adjunct faculty and 170 full-time resident faculty who provide the backbone to the university's commitment to a student-centered learning environment and civic and community engagement.

Emphasizing the core value of Engagement through community-based, student-centered courses at the local, regional, and global levels, the university continues to

graduate students that are civically engaged in their communities and understand the role education plays in building strong communities. The President's Circle of Engagement recognizes faculty demonstrating engagement through courses. In 2011–2012, ninety-three faculty members were recognized. In addition, 282 course sections also offered community engagement opportunities to nearly 5,000 students (duplicated headcount) who completed over 67,000 hours of service.

The university's vision of an "unwavering commitment to civic engagement" is also demonstrated through support of the Institute for Community Engagement and Scholarship (ICES), which is charged with leading and measuring the university's engagement initiatives. Housed in Academic Affairs, ICES is nationally recognized for its work with faculty across the university and community organizations to develop academic community-based opportunities for civic engagement and research while meeting community-defined needs.

With a departmental mission and vision of "university and community members coming together in equitable relationships to learn and work towards social transformation," ICES also provides a place for new start-up initiatives, including the Civic Engagement Minor, now housed in the College for Individualized Studies. It is an "incubator" for the development of new academic community engagement initiatives. ICES fosters social transformation and civic responsibility by facilitating opportunities to connect student-centered learning with the challenges and opportunities of urban communities, deepening the campus culture of community engagement, addressing mutually-defined interests, and building on the capacities of local communities.

Another key department supporting the success of the joint library is the Metropolitan State University's library department. For its community members, the university library offers Community Borrower Cards that offer individuals ages thirteen and over a variety of privileges, including the use of computers, study spaces, and the library materials. From October 2011 through October 2012, the hours of usage for the community computers ranged from approximately 3,000 to 4,000 hours with a spike in June and July 2012 when community members were allowed more access to university computers, demonstrating the desire of community members to have access to technology.

The library department provides support to faculty to integrate library resources into courses, with numerous resources to help facilitate research and collaboration by faculty and students. The library is home to the Center for Teaching and Learning, a support unit providing resident and adjunct faculty with ongoing professional development. It is also home to the Center for Academic Excellence, an academic department that provides university students with math and writing assistance.

## **Partnership and Program Development—the Early Days**

Throughout public meetings and discussions with community leaders, university administration looked to ICES (then called the Center for Community-Based Learning) to take a leadership role in developing connections between the university library, the public branch library, and the community. ICES oversaw the initial three-year grant that supported the collaborative development of new initiatives and worked with faculty and staff to integrate library-related and community-defined programming into existing courses and outreach initiatives. In addition, ICES was also tasked with overseeing the evaluation of the collaborative grant-funded work, which included working with an external evaluator to develop measurable outcomes and collect quantitative data to measure usage of the library physical and educational resources. In addition, ICES tracked academic community-based and service opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to measure university engagement.

Serving youth and adults through collaborative academic and outreach initiatives, ICES' long-standing relationships with local community organizations and schools on the east side of St. Paul led to a natural progression of collaborative library services and programs for the community with a focus on the underserved populations.

When Metropolitan State University and the Dayton's Bluff Branch community-university library opened in 2004, there was abundant funding and staffing in both the university's Library and Learning Center and the public branch library. One full-time university administrative faculty position was funded through a grant administered by ICES to support the development of new programs and integrate library-related programming into existing outreach initiatives.

In addition, ICES was also charged with the development and management of tools to measure university-wide engagement. The collection and use of data about library engagement of faculty, students, staff, and the community is the shared responsibility of ICES and the public library staff. Initially grant guidelines drove the qualitative and quantitative collection of data, but with significant staffing changes and restructuring of the public library system, over the last five years ICES and the public library staff have streamlined data collection methods by sharing the tasks of tracking usage and gathering qualitative information.

A comprehensive three-year evaluation completed in 2007 indicated that the collaborative initiatives of ICES and the joint libraries surpassed expectations for all initial community-defined goals and objectives. This report included goals and objectives added in 2006 (two years into the grant) to meet the neighborhood's growing and changing needs. The following findings were reported in a narrative by an independent evaluator in the *Metropolitan State University 2007 Bush Foundation Final Report Narrative*:

The library-community outreach program focuses efforts on the east side of St. Paul, with special attention given to the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood. Both the university library and the public library track numbers of users through library card registrations, gate counts, and circulating materials. These numbers indicate what portions of the collections are circulating and how many visits are made to the libraries. The numbers are then used to refine collection decisions, operating hours, and staffing, as reflected in the extension of service hours already implemented. The university library has registered 1,109 community borrower cards from August of 2006 through August 2007, a significant increase over previous years. The public library has created 1,792 patron records between July 1, 2006, and June 30, 2007, with Dayton's Bluff listed as the home library. Eight hundred twenty six of those resided in the Dayton's Bluff/east side 55106 zip code. To measure how many people visited the Dayton's Bluff Branch Library, the gate count (closest measure possible for this) from January 2006–Dec. 2006 was 170,225. This is an 18 percent increase over the previous year. Page 6

Outcomes for existing programs in the 2006–2007 academic year included eight university students serving as tutors in the Zone Homework Center, 260 youth serving through collaborative library and ICES programs, and four new faculty integrating library-related community-based learning into their existing courses. New projects and programs involving library-community outreach were developed and evaluated, including the Teens Know Best Reading program, basic computer skill building sessions for adults, and faculty seminars to integrate library-related community-based (service-learning) components into existing courses.

## **Fast Forward to 2012**

To date, more than 2,700 borrower cards have been issued to community members thirteen years of age and older. Community-designated computers are utilized an average of 3,500 hours monthly, with significant increases to over 4,500 hours in the summer months when community members are granted access to additional (usually university student-designated) computers. Gate counts for the public library in calendar year 2011 were 130,254. A decrease in gate counts from earlier years is attributed to budget and staffing cuts; however, current data would indicate the potential for increased use of public and university library resources if the libraries were able to increase their hours of service to the community.

The partnership between the two libraries sharing one facility makes the improvement of educational access a major focus. Many of the programs are designed to increase literacy, general learning, study skills, school success, and an increase in residents' aspirations to further education. The joint libraries partner with local community organizations and cultural community programs to offer tailored programming and events. University faculty and students, along with staff from the university and public library, connect on a daily basis to share information that will benefit the community we serve.

The Zone Homework Center has reported more than 4,000 visits per year (per sign-in sheets) and offers computer skill-building workshops and job search workshops in addition to general tutoring. Additional computer workshops respond to the “digital divide” by providing Internet access and computer skills to low-wealth individuals and families who do not have access to computers and the Internet at home. Increased demand created a need to add more tutors and monitoring of those tutors, so ICES and public library staff worked together to develop tutor staffing plans to ensure that adequate one-on-one tutor services are available for youth and adults. The ICES and public library staff collaborate on scheduling and recruiting work-study students, recruiting university students in courses requiring service-learning or community-engagement hours, and collaborating with other Metropolitan State departments and other St. Paul universities. Through community-based courses and work study, twenty-five Metropolitan State University students provided over 1,500 hours of tutoring in the Zone Homework Center in 2011–2012 academic year.

Family story times have also increased and are offered weekly in the children’s section of the public library. In addition, ICES and the public library collaborate on several family literacy events annually. These events may include featuring guest authors or providing literacy reading and activities while parents and older siblings are attending workshops. The partners work together with students, faculty, staff, and community members to share the “behind the scenes” tasks and expenses with a goal of providing families a positive experience and providing books for families to take home to build their home libraries.

Increased elementary and secondary college exploration and access programming through ICES’ youth outreach programs has, in turn, increased the number of youth visiting the library and participating in library-related workshops. In the 2011–2012 academic year, more than 300 youth participated in library-related workshops, including topics of library exploration, social media, or using the library’s physical and online resources for educational and recreational purposes. The library workshops provide university students with opportunities to develop and facilitate workshop curriculum for youth of all ages through community-based coursework. University students from several discipline areas, including the School of Urban Education; College of Individualized Studies; and the College of Health, Community, and Professional Studies; gain experience working directly with youth from inner city schools and programs.

The Dayton’s Bluff Branch Library and ICES’ youth, family and library-community outreach programs continue to offer collaborative field trips for schools, youth programs, and adult groups. ICES and Admissions collaborated on writing university tour scripts, which included information about the university and public libraries for visitors. These tours, led by university student ambassadors, take the form of a scavenger hunt for younger audiences with youth visiting campus offices and touring the library to learn of its many services available to them now, as well as services they will utilize when they become a college student.

In 2007, the university received a TRIO Upward Bound grant to serve the St. Paul Public School high school students. Upward Bound, along with ICES' YOUNiversity Middle School program, offers summer academic and enrichment programs for young people on the St. Paul campus. These programs utilize the joint library physical space and resources for writing and research and, in 2012, served approximately ninety middle school students. Access to PC classroom labs enabled university students, faculty, and community members to teach youth workshops on a variety of topics, including social media safety, digital writing, natural resource education, and using online research tools.

Teens Know Best is an excellent example of a partner program sustained through academic engagement and the dedication of the public library staff and the university's faculty, students, and staff. This program is for young people ages 12 to 18 who want to read and review books for a prestigious national program, which connects teens and their opinions about books directly with the publishers who produce them. The Young Adult Library Services Association of the American Library Association (YALSA) selects fifteen teen review groups each year from around the United States and Canada to participate—ten as “standard” nominating groups and five as “voting” nominating groups. The joint library's Teens Know Best program was one of the ten standard groups chosen in this prestigious competitive process and will be eligible to apply for the voting group level in two years. This program continues to be a collaborative program of the joint library and ICES, led by a university faculty and provides academic internship opportunities for university students.

A new initiative developed by university library faculty and public library staff is the Northstar Basic Computer Skills Certificate. As basic computer skills are increasingly necessary for most employment (including entry-level jobs), there is a need for adults to demonstrate basic digital competency. The Northstar Basic Computer Skills Certificate provides a credential to show potential employers that basic computer skills have been obtained. This free service includes online assessment modules for Basic Computer Skills, Internet, E-mail, Word Processing (Word), Windows OS, and Mac OS, and is offered in English and Spanish. This new certification provides yet another opportunity for public library staff, as well as university students and staff, to connect with individuals in a positive way that meets a community-defined need.

## **The University's Model for Institutionalization of Engagement**

While Metropolitan State University strives to be a good partner, the primary goal is to serve its university students. The university embraces engagement as high impact learning and retention strategies for its students. With a philosophy of graduating civic-minded students who value personal, professional, and academic engagement as mentioned earlier, the faculty, staff, and administration accept a university-wide approach to identifying community connections and various components of engagement through the Circle of Engagement (see Diagram 1). The Circle of

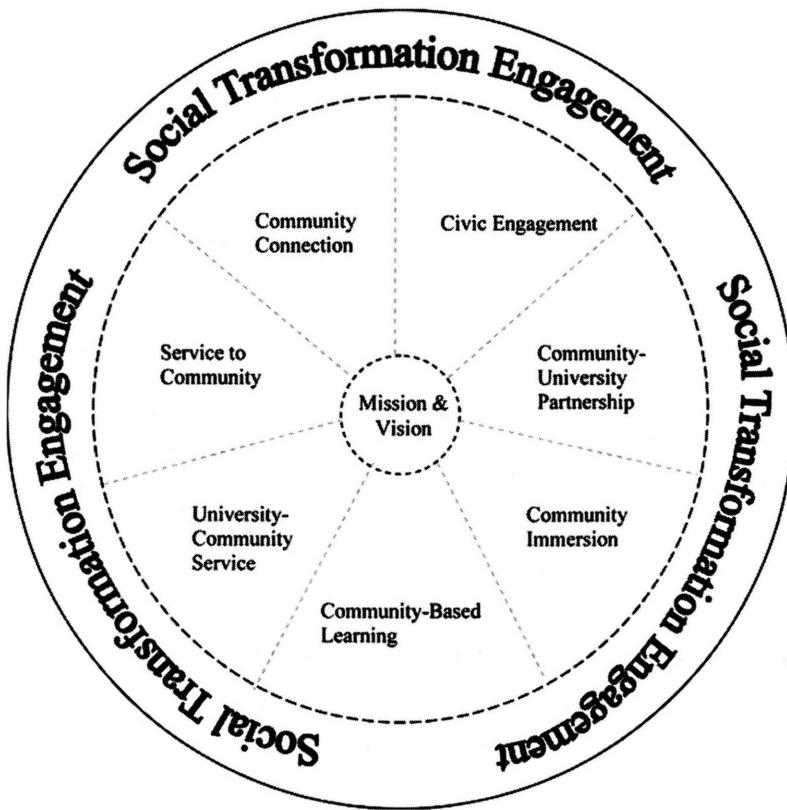
Engagement is used to identify and describe campus-community engagement initiatives that provide opportunities for students. It is used to identify and recognize faculty in the President's Circle of Engagement, which is a distinction to honor faculty offering courses that include engagement. It has also been integrated as criteria for tenure and promotion.

By using the Circle of Engagement in the context of the library-community initiatives, we can better demonstrate concrete examples of the university's engagement work, and how this work aligns with community-defined needs in a community-university library setting.

In Diagram 1, we have provided library-related examples using the Circle of Engagement, demonstrating how university-wide accepted criteria can assist in developing and sustaining institutionalized long-term engagement leading to social transformation.

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**Diagram 1. Social Transformation Engagement: A long-term unified commitment by the university and larger community to alter social disparities by working toward social change and justice.**



## **Examples from the Joint Metropolitan State University Library and Learning Center and the Dayton's Bluff Branch of the St. Paul Library:**

The partnership between the St. Paul Public Library and Metropolitan State University encompasses all facets of the Circle of Engagement. The university's definition for each facet is provided below, followed by an example activity.

### **Civic Engagement**

*Active involvement in exercising the power of citizens in public life and learning. This requires developing a combination of knowledge, skills, values, and reflection to promote one or more of the following activities: socially responsible daily behavior, direct service, community or economic development, voting or other formal political activities, direct action strategies, grass-roots political activity or public policy work, community building, or advocacy through community education.*

The Metro State Votes initiatives included a mock polling place in collaboration with the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State's Office Voter and Outreach Education program. An actual polling machine from the Minnesota Secretary of State's Office was set up in the library's first-floor lounge area where university students, community members, and first-time voters could participate in a mock poll of their favorite Minnesota State Fair food, register to vote, and find their polling place. Voter registration efforts resulted in over 600 new registered voters. Faculty, staff, students, and community members gathered for discussions on a variety of voter issues, including faculty led pre- and post-discussions for the presidential debates. Metro State Votes 2012 events coordinated by students, faculty, and staff included non-partisan discussions on the proposed Voter Registration I.D. and Marriage Amendments, which were included on the November 6 ballots. The university and public library set up displays with books on such topics as the U.S. history on politics and books written by past presidents. With university-wide support from academic and non-academic departments, and in collaboration with the university and public libraries, we reached out to community organizations and individuals to offer free events open to all. Over 300 students, faculty, staff, and community members participated in Metro State Votes 2012 initiatives.

### **Community-Based Learning**

A university-wide approach to teaching, research, or experiential learning that combines authentic community or public service activity with academic instruction, focusing on critical reflective thinking as well as evidence of civic responsibility and/or personal growth.

The Literacy Corps is an initiative with a goal to have every child reading independently by the third grade. Metropolitan State University supported this effort by integrating tutors into inner city sites, including elementary schools and libraries,

where they worked directly with children facing significant language and literacy challenges. A focus on the Zone Homework Center in the Dayton's Bluff branch library provided university students opportunities to serve as tutors for 20+ hours each through community-based courses offered through the Writing and School of Urban Education, as well as other academic departments. Public library and ICES staff members, along with student coordinators, recruited university students to serve as tutors through classroom presentations and publications.

## **Community Connection**

*A relationship with one or more community organization(s) and one or more department(s) or program(s) within the university to accomplish a shared objective on a short-term basis which may or may not include academic learning.*

The College Goal "Saturday" program kick-off is a collaborative program of the university, public library, and the MN College Goal program to provide the local community Free Application For Student Aid (FAFSA) completion assistance, tax assistance, and college access information. By including faculty and students into the planning and implementation of the activities, and pooling university and public library resources, College Goal "Saturday" took a unique approach to adapting the national College Goal Sunday SM program, tailoring it to the community's needs. Funding was provided by combining internal and external resources to host a kick-off event that not only offered requested free Tax Preparation and FAFSA workshops, but informed the community of the wealth of resources available through the partners and the broader community.

Through academic co-curricular and community engagement work; the university's Accounting, Financial Aid, TRIO, a federal program designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds; and the Admission departments collaborated with ICES, library staff, community youth organizations, and schools to provide community-defined services for low income families. Tax preparation services were provided by tax accounting students supervised by accounting faculty. Financial Aid staff and student assistants facilitated drop-in FAFSA workshops, and library staff members and university students introduced families to the wealth of resources available through the public library system, online resources, and other community resources. ICES student coordinators, tutors, and library staff organized and facilitated children's activities in the public and university library to keep them entertained while parents and older sibling receive tax and FAFSA preparation assistance. Student Ambassadors from the Admission's office also offered campus tours to interested groups and individuals. Additional tax assistance and FAFSA workshops were offered throughout spring to meet the great demand of these services.

## **Community Immersion**

*A university course or program that involves significant student immersion in a community-based project, program, organization, or governmental unit with a primary focus on reflective learning that supports or enhances classroom learning.*

The Digital Divide course project was created in response to the gap in computer literacy skills in underserved populations. Faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences Writing Department worked with university students in courses to prepare them for assisting in the public library's computer literacy workshops offered to community members learning basic computer skills. The Zone Homework Center coordinator worked with ICES and university faculty in order to set up classroom presentations to recruit university students and to supervise the tutor services provided by the Writing students.

## **Community-University Partnership**

*A mutually defined relationship between at least one university department or program and one or more community-based organization(s) of sufficient scale and duration to significantly benefit the community organization(s), while providing important learning opportunities and reflection for university students.*

The joint library facility is itself an ideal example of this conception of a Community-University Partnership.

## **Service to Community**

*One or more university department(s), program(s), or course(s) committed to regular opportunities for students and faculty to assist community organizations with their objectives, which may or may not include academic learning.*

Job search classes were offered through the public library. University students assisted community members with one-on-one help with résumés, interview coaching, and other job and career assistance through work-study opportunities or courses requiring a service component.

## **University-Community Service**

*A university department, program, or course and a community partner are committed to the mutual sharing of objectives in this reciprocal relationship, which may or may not include an academic component.*

Children's book authors were invited to read to children and their families in the children's section of the public library. ICES worked with the public library to manage the responsibilities of recruiting authors and planning events held in the children's section of the public library. Grant funds and public library funds supported activities, refreshments, and purchasing books to build family home libraries.

## **Sustaining the Partnership through Shared Resources and Responsibilities**

A unique feature of the collaboration is the co-supervision of personnel. The university designates a total of three positions toward the coordination of collaborative initiatives that provide university students the academic and co-curricular opportunities as described previously. Annually, over 100 students, faculty, and staff participate in varied programs that serve audiences frequenting the joint library. The public library staffing for the collaborative initiatives includes a Homework Center student coordinator, an AmeriCorps Community Technology Empowerment Project (CTEP) coordinator, and two library staff supervisors. All students and staff collaborate to connect the community with resources, programs, outreach, and services. University students are jointly recruited to serve as tutors, workshop teachers, and assistants in outreach programming through community-based or service-learning internships and work-study opportunities. When issues arise, we collaboratively discuss and come to a shared decision. We continually focus on how, together, we can better serve all audiences and improve the current processes with diminishing resources.

## **Other Services and Features of the Shared Library**

As both its original design and as experience of the partnership relationship has deepened, the joint facility has made a number of other services, facilities, and features available to the community and to the university community. Some of these demonstrate or celebrate the connections between the partners and/or unique assets and traits of the area.

Tailored to their specific needs, special events, services, and field trips for local groups or organizations are co-coordinated by ICES and public library staff. Community organizations, local writers, artists, and other individuals regularly lead workshops hosted by the partnering libraries. Housing and Historic Preservation discussions are examples of community-led workshops offered to the university community and local neighborhood. These opportunities provide local residents and community organizations with resources, including classrooms and art exhibition space, staff assistance, and publicity to reach audiences they would otherwise have difficulty reaching. This has resulted in the work of individual artists and writers as well as small organizations, to be further enhanced, while providing educational opportunities for the partners and the east side community. These connections happen naturally, deepening the relationship not only between the university and St. Paul Public Library, but with individual community members, organizations and the local community as well.

A major asset of Metro State's Library and Learning Center is the Gordon Parks Gallery, which is named after former St. Paul resident Gordon Parks who overcame poverty and racism to become a noted writer, artist, composer, photographer, and filmmaker. The Gallery is dedicated to showing the interdisciplinary artwork of emerging and established artists of varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Located on

the third floor of the library, it is frequented not only by university students, staff, and faculty, but also by the community and its youth who come to the inviting space experience the exhibitions and permanent prints of Parks. Young people are exposed to local and national artists work, and they have worked alongside artists like Ta-couumba Aiken, a local mixed media artist, creating their own pieces through painting, mosaic, and bookmaking workshops. Through the ICES youth and library outreach programs, youth learn about the work of Parks through hand-on workshops, exhibits, and participation in associated cultural activities. These workshops encourage young people to explore the world of art and positive forms of self-expression, and to gain new skills and inspiration needed succeed in school and become engaged in their community.

Perhaps the most notable program of the Gordon Parks Youth Outreach initiative is the hands-on digital photography workshops. ICES worked with the gallery director and a local non-profit intermedia community arts organization, In Progress, to develop a Gordon Parks' workshop curriculum that aligns with standards of learning for fourth-through twelfth-grade students. These workshops provide engagement opportunities for university students to work with young people, introducing them to career choices in the arts and teaching them of peaceful ways to explore and express views on social issues through photography and writing. Students visit the Gordon Parks Gallery, critique and analyze the technical aspects of exhibits including Gordon Parks' photos, learn about Mr. Parks' life work and participate in digital photography workshops. Students gains skills by learning to use digital cameras, take photos that "tell a story," and learn to digitally enhance the photos in library lab classrooms.

The Dayton's Bluff Book Club provides a place for adult community members to gather, read, and discuss multicultural and local author's books. Local authors are invited to lead discussions, connecting the community members and providing readers' insight to their writing journeys. The book club meets six times a year, once a month October through March, and is open to anyone (students, faculty, staff, and community members) living or working on the east side of St. Paul. Since its inception four years ago, this book club has increased in size and diversity, bringing unique and cultural perspectives to each meeting. The Dayton's Bluff Book Club is co-sponsored by the Dayton's Bluff Branch Public Library, Metropolitan State University's Library, and ICES. Funds to support the book club are provided by Metropolitan State University Library Endowment funds awarded to ICES.

A community-university project still in progress is the installation of the David Barton Community Labyrinth and Reflective Garden. The labyrinth installed in the fall of 2012 and reflective garden installed in the spring of 2013 celebrates gardening and community engagement—two passions of the late library dean, David Barton. Artist Lisa Moriarty of Stillwater, Minnesota, designed the Circle of Peace™ walking labyrinth, thirty-foot in radius, and consisting of 2,000 linear feet of looped walking paths called circuits. The community labyrinth and reflective garden, located on the library grounds, provides university students, staff, faculty, and community members a place to walk, meditate, reflect, read, and just relax. The university's counseling

services and Veteran's Center plans to use the labyrinth for students experiencing stress and anxiety. Faculty across disciplines in Nursing, Urban Education, and Psychology are integrating labyrinth education and reflection into courses. Current community and youth outreach programs will also integrate labyrinth education and reflection, with a focus on local community schools and organizations, welcoming all to experience this ancient practice of spirituality.

## **Conclusion**

The development of the University-Community Library eight years ago provided the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood with access to a full range of technology and informative resources. The University-Community Library and Information Access Center provides both young and adult community users a shared safe and quiet public place for study and the use of materials. The Dayton's Bluff Branch Library provides the community with a facility that especially focuses on children, youth, and their families. The only library of its kind in Minnesota, this shared facility is proving to be a place to forge new ideas and relationships, and to expand ways of meeting the needs of a diverse urban population.

The library partnership is best understood through a description of its history, its cooperative staffing, and the features that intimately connect a community, a public library system, and a university. Focusing on these three dimensions helps to explain why it provides a model for service-learning practice that is both institutionally and community-based. (Shumer et al. 2009, 77)

The ongoing creativity of students, faculty, and staff has provided fun interactive educational workshops and activities for young people, as well as necessary developmental services for adults. The partnering organizations have experienced significant staffing changes, staff reductions (because of the erosion of public-sector funding,) and organizational restructuring since the library's opening. However, the dedication and support of the students, faculty, and staff of the university and the public library, as well as community member involvement, have ensured that the library has risen above the challenges and forged on. Through creative staffing plans and reassignment of work responsibilities and the unwavering commitment of both partners, we are able to sustain the initial programs and continue to develop new initiatives to serve the community youth and adults from Dayton's Bluff and surrounding neighborhoods, while providing academic community engagement opportunities for faculty, students, and staff.

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